

# VOICES OF THE STONES



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TORONTO

# VOICES OF THE STONES

*by A. E.*

“The shining rock  
From which arise a hundred strains”  
*The Voyage of Bran*

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## TO PADRAIC COLUM

*I MADE these verses in a rocky land,  
And I have named them Voices of the Stones,  
Although they do not keep that innocence  
Was shed on me when quiet made me kin  
To the cold immobile herd. All things have  
changed*

*From primal nature save these stones: all things  
Since Eden, bird and beast and fin, have  
strayed*

*Far from that shining garden of His thought:  
We also. Only the humble stones have kept  
Their morning starriness of purity  
Immutable. Being unfallen they breathe  
Only unfallen life; and with my cheek  
Pressed to their roughness I had part regained  
My morning starriness, and made these songs  
Half from the hidden world and half from this.*

## OUTCAST

SOMETIMES when alone  
At the dark close of day,  
Men meet an outlawed majesty  
And hurry away.

They come to the lighted house;  
They talk to their dear;  
They crucify the mystery  
With words of good cheer.

When love and life are over,  
And flight's at an end,  
On the outcast majesty  
They lean as a friend.

## EXILES

THE gods have taken alien shapes upon  
them,  
Wild peasants driving swine  
In a strange country. Through the swarthy  
faces  
The starry faces shine.

Under grey tattered skies they strain and  
reel there:  
Yet cannot all disguise  
The majesty of fallen gods, the beauty,  
The fire beneath their eyes.

They huddle at night within low, clay-built  
cabins;  
And, to themselves unknown,  
They carry with them diadem and sceptre  
And move from throne to throne.

## ARTISTRY

To bring this loveliness to be,  
Even for an hour, the Builder must  
Have wrought in the laboratory  
Of many a star for its sweet dust.

Oh, to make possible that heart  
And that gay breath so lightly sighed:  
What agony was in the art!  
How many gods were crucified!

## MUTINY

THAT blazing galleon the sun,  
This dusky coracle I ride,  
Both under secret orders sail,  
And swim upon the selfsame tide.

The fleet of stars, my boat of soul,  
By perilous magic mountains pass,  
Or lie where no horizons gleam  
Fainting upon a sea of glass.

Come, break the seals and tell us now  
Upon what enterprise we roam:  
To storm what city of the gods,  
Or—sail for the green fields of home!

## JEALOUSY

Youth met within a garden,  
And youth to youth revealed  
Time's loveliest hidden secrets,  
Things that were dead and sealed:

What domes of ivory wonder  
Rose in the golden race:  
What heavens were fabled o'er them—  
For some face like this face.

Youth roamed by shore and mountain  
And its new wisdom told:  
But earth and sea were silent,  
Their lovely faces cold.

## A HOLY HILL

Be still: be still: nor dare  
    Unpack what you have brought,  
Nor loosen on this air  
    Red gnomes of your thought.

Uncover: bend the head  
    And let the feet be bare;  
This air that thou breathest  
    Is holy air.

Sin not against the Breath,  
    Using ethereal fire  
To make seem as faery  
    A wanton desire.

Know that this granite height  
    May be a judgement throne,  
Dread thou the unmoveable will,  
    The wrath of stone.

## TIME

At every heart-beat  
Through the magic day  
A lovely laughing creature  
Ran away.  
Where have they wandered,  
The flock so gay?

I had but looked on them  
And away they ran,  
The exquisite lips untouched.  
As they began  
To part, Time swept them  
On his caravan.

These new-born beauties  
The tyrant took.  
Their gaze was on mine  
And mine forsook.  
I could not stay even  
One lovely look.

In what fold are they?  
Could I pursue

## TIME

Through the Everliving  
And know anew  
All those golden motions  
That were you?

Were beauty only  
A day the same,  
We could know the Maker  
And name His name.  
We would know the substance  
Was holy flame.

Is there an oasis  
Where Time stands still,  
Where the fugitive beauty  
Stays as we will?  
Is there an oasis  
Where Time stands still?

## SURVIVAL

WHAT pent-up fury in those arms,  
Red gilded by the sun's last breath!  
The spade along the ridges runs  
As if it had a race with death.

The clods fly right: the clods fly left:  
The ridges rise on either side,  
The tireless fury is not spent,  
Though the fierce sunset long has died.

The strength which tossed the hills on high,  
And rent the stormy seas apart,  
Is still within those mighty limbs,  
Still stirs the dreams of that wild heart.

## RESURRECTION

Not by me these feet were led  
    To the path beside the wave,  
Where the naiad lilies shed  
    Moonfire o'er a lonely grave.

Let the dragons of the past  
    In their caverns sleeping lie.  
I am dream-betrayed, and cast  
    Into that old agony.

And an anguish of desire  
    Burns as in the sunken years,  
And the soul sheds drops of fire  
    All unquenchable by tears.

I, who sought on high for calm,  
    In the Everliving find  
All I was in what I am,  
    Fierce with gentle intertwined;

Hearts which I had crucified  
    With my heart that tortured them;  
Penitence, unfallen pride—  
    These my thorny diadem!

## RESURRECTION

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Thou would'st ease in heaven thy pain,  
    Oh, thou fiery, bleeding thing!  
All thy wounds will wake again  
    At the heaving of a wing.

All thy dead with thee shall rise,  
    *Dies Irae.* If the soul  
To the Everliving flies,  
    There shall meet it at the goal

Love that Time had overlaid,  
    Deaths that we again must die—  
Let the dragons we have made  
    In their caverns sleeping lie.

## FORLORN

My wisdom crumbles.  
I am as a lone child.  
Oh, had I the heart now  
My weeping were wild.

My palace dwindle  
Thin into air:  
The Ancient Darkness  
Is everywhere:

But the heart is gone  
That could understand,  
And the child is dead  
That had taken Its hand.

## RESCUE

How deep the night about that soul!  
How fast the manacles! I brood  
And recreate in my own heart  
Its agony of solitude.

Have golden lips breathed in that dark?  
And was the breath as vainly blown  
As yon frail wind that trembles on  
This mammoth herd of brutish stone?

A kinsman of the cherubim  
Chained in this pit's abysmal mire!  
Sound for the rescue! Bugles, blow!  
Gird on the armoury of fire!

## TRANSIENCE

WHY does my fancy soon forsake  
All that is perfect to the eye,  
The ruffled silver of the lake,  
The silent silver of the sky,  
Its single star that is so shy,  
That trembles like a golden fawn  
Strayed from the blue and shadowy wood  
Of night upon the twilight lawn:  
Why is the heart so soon withdrawn?  
Even on earth's last lovely brood  
Of primroses it hardly dwells,  
Though myriads, a tender mist,  
Warm the pale green of chilly dells,  
The aftershine of amethyst,  
The glades of midnight overhead,  
Where browse the flocks the fawn has led,  
All glimmering, till they are laid  
Folden in light which is their shade—  
Did ever earth from its first prime  
Move to a lovelier dance than this?  
But yet I cannot keep in chime.  
Swift as the whirling dervish is

My heart floats on a swifter tide.  
As one upon a hurrying stream  
Sees towers and forests as in dream  
Drift by him upon either side,  
So do I see, and then I fly  
From these to that they prophesy.

It is not that my heart is cold  
To beauty, for my pulses beat  
As bloom and odour jet their sweet  
From tiny fountains in the mould,  
And many rainbow trumpets blow;  
But still my heart divines from these  
How near are the Hesperides,  
How rich to have this overflow  
From sacred earth through common clay:  
And all my being yearns to run,  
To tread the meadows of the sun  
And bask in that enchanted day.

The suns that rise, the suns that set,  
Time's tidal waves of blue and gold  
That roll from far ethereal seas,  
Hill-land and forest, starlit pool,  
Are images we soon forget,  
And swiftest when most beautiful.  
For when most beautiful we feel  
That there is something they reveal,  
Some lordlier being of their kind;  
And beauty only meaneth this  
And to the symbol we are blind.

## TRANSIENCEx

The gifts that fortune brings, the kiss,  
The lovely life, the heart unveiled,  
Are images of heights unscaled.  
And we adore while to our thought  
Being with symbol seems enwrought,  
Yet if we would the rapture stay,  
The spirit is the open door  
Through which the prisoner steals away.  
Maybe there is a native shore  
For us, for it, where we may find  
A beauty stedfast to the mind,  
Joy that will not so lightly stray  
To join the maskers in the dance,  
Eternity with Time at play.

## A MOUNTAIN WIND

THE cold limbs of the air  
Brush by me on the hill,  
Climb to the utmost crag,  
Leap out, then all is still.

Ah, but what high intent  
In the cold will of wind;  
What sceptre would it grasp  
To leave these dreams behind!

Trail of celestial things:  
White centaurs, winged in flight,  
Through the fired heart sweep on,  
A hurricane of light.

I have no plumes for air:  
Earth hugs to it my bones.  
Leave me, O sky-born powers,  
Brother to grass and stones.

## PROMISE

BE not so desolate  
Because thy dreams have flown  
And the hall of the heart is empty  
And silent as stone,  
As age left by children  
Sad and alone.

Those delicate children,  
Thy dreams, still endure:  
All pure and lovely things  
Wend to the Pure.  
Sigh not: unto the fold  
Their way was sure.

Thy gentlest dreams, thy frailest,  
Even those that were  
Born and lost in a heart-beat,  
Shall meet thee there.  
They are become immortal  
In shining air.

The unattainable beauty  
The thought of which was pain,

## PROMISE

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That flickered in eyes and on lips  
And vanished again:  
That fugitive beauty  
Thou shalt attain.

The lights innumerable  
That led thee on and on,  
The Masque of Time ended,  
Shall glow into one.  
It shall be with thee for ever  
Thy travel done.

## ABUNDANCE

Like grey mastodon  
Upon the mountain side  
Rocks lay as if to guard  
Its austere pride.

All stone unto the eye:  
Yet is the heart at rest  
As babe happed in cradle  
Or on the breast.

All that earth is,  
Mountain or solitude,  
Was born out of pity  
And is milk for her brood.

## ANCIENT

THE sky is cold as pearl  
Over a milk-white land.  
The snow seems older than Time  
Though it fell through a dreaming and  
Will vanish itself as a dream  
At the dimmest touch of a hand.

Out of a timeless world  
Shadows fall upon Time,  
From a beauty older than earth  
A ladder the soul may climb.  
I climb by the phantom stair  
To a whiteness older than Time.

## NATURAL MAGIC

FROM whence has flown this argosy of air  
That o'er the forest dropped its merchandise,  
Spilling a fire so rich, a wine so rare?  
Through the long glade from russet floor to  
skies

Darkness and fire are revellers everywhere.  
The leaves like gold and emerald butterflies  
With myriad quiverings roof the forest  
glade.

Around me where I lie  
The orange flames race through the tattered  
shade  
Dazzling the downcast eye.

Downcast the eye; but not the heart within;  
The aerial wine delights: the unblinding fire  
Opens the ways, far past the leafy din  
And revelry of light; by what desire  
Borne onward through invisible gates to win  
To that high region where unto one lyre,  
Played by the Magian of the Beautiful,

The starry feet keep time,  
And these last hyacinths in shadows cool  
Echo with distant rhyme.

Distant! The wizard air has breathed away  
The heaviness from earth. The sombre  
trees

To cloud change unimaginably; nay;  
To fire, to mind. Ancestral images,  
Ere that unfallen Eden had its day  
Of yet undimmed forest and flower, these  
Living and lustrous and ethereal shapes

I see with sight unblind,  
In heavenly valleys or on glittering capes  
Glowed in the Magian's mind.

They fade: the forest flickers round me now:  
Once more the incessant birth and death of  
light

On russet floor, green leaf and burnished  
bough

Dazzle. Yet still the visionary sight  
Holds faintly, as these thicker airs allow,  
A magic mist of dancers pale and bright,  
A foam of golden faces from the spheres

Beyond sun rise or set,  
With eyes that had for long forgotten tears  
Or never had been wet.

Vanished the angelic trees and beings all!  
The wood darkens: the wind has ceased to  
fan

The glade to flame. Oh, it was magical!  
Can I recall? The blinding sunlight ran  
Over the burning hyacinth to fall

## NATURAL MAGIC

Starry upon yon water. So began  
The incantation of the light which brought  
Rapt face and fiery wing,  
The Heaven of Heavens: a myriad marvel  
wrought  
And from so slight a thing!

## OLD WINE

THE boys with their golden limbs  
Shine out through the tawny glare.  
They race, and after their heels  
The shadows in purple flare.

They dance from the sand to the sea  
And shatter its blue as they pass,  
Till the tide is frothy with light  
And glimmers with bubbles like glass.

And Michael, Rory and Teige  
Are aglow with the Sun and the Wind;  
For unto their rapturous youth  
The ancient nurses are kind.

They drink the oldest of wine.  
It sparkles like fire in their clay,  
A Spirit breathed in the waters  
Ere Time had buried a day.

## ADVENTURE

THE night is still as stone.  
What wonder at its core  
Lures the hot soul, a lone  
Conquistador?

Is there a Fount of Youth,  
An Eldorado there?  
What may it find, what truth  
In hollow air?

Yet from this waste it can  
Bring back its golden hordes  
Captive, its caravan  
Of starry words.

## NIGHT WIND

I LOVE to think this fragrant air  
I breathe in the deep-bosomed night  
Has mixed with beauty, and may bear  
The burden of a heart's delight.

This may have been the burning breath  
That uttered Deirdre's love. It may  
Have been a note outlasting death  
As Sappho sang her heart away.

It may have fanned a joy so deep  
That Ilium must pay the price,  
And under desert sand must sleep  
Heroes and towers in sacrifice.

And this rich air, it may have been,—  
To bring these dreams, so sweet a throng.—  
Sighed by the lovely listening queen  
While Solomon had sung his song.

So it will take from me, from thee,  
Ere from our being it departs,  
And keep for lovers yet to be  
All the enchantment of our hearts.

## IF

If not a plume may vanish out of air,  
If all things living stand,  
But by a will, and that withheld, we were  
Less than a shifting sand—  
Where in our being has the god its hold?  
Where is the burning hand?

Where does the might that holds our frailty  
Lie hidden? Oh, somewhere  
A light shows where the hand is laid, will  
lead  
Us by some lustrous stair  
To find the god, take the invisible hand  
And tread the starry air!

## MAGNIFICENCE

CLOISTERED amid these austere rocks,  
A brooding seer, I watched an hour,  
Close to the earth, lost to all else,  
The marvel of a tiny flower.

To build its palace walls of jade  
What myriads toiled in dark and cold:  
And what gay traders from the sun  
Brought down its sapphire and its gold!

Oh, palace of the universe!  
Oh, changing halls of day and night!  
Does the high Builder dream in thee  
With more of wonder and delight?

## SNARES

I FAINT rememb'ring all that shook my will;  
How the light outposts even of paradise  
O'ercame me with the witchery of eyes  
Or delicate magic of the lips: how still  
A motion white and fugitive can thrill  
With longings that are immortalities.  
How, if the heart to these frail enemies  
Yields, can it hope to scale the heavenly hill,  
See beauty in its fulness, or endure  
The last temptation, which is but seeing  
The gorgeous shadow of all that is its own?  
That mirrored majesty is the last lure  
To hide from it its own immortal being.  
Heaven lies between the spirit and its throne.

## THE LOST OTHERS

You set your heart on Nancy.  
You won your fancy, lad.  
But love had never taught you  
What other names she had,  
Or what gay Naiad lent her grace,  
What shining Oread.

You did not know what beauty  
Thronged in that light disguise:  
What eyes gazed out of Faery,  
What Sibyl from the Wise,  
What burning miracle her soul  
Was in its native skies.

You won your pretty Nancy;  
But she was all you had.  
The starry women vanished.  
A lonely lass and lad  
Mutely upon each other gaze  
Nor know why they are sad.

## THE SOWER

AFTER the sower with the seed  
What mightier being strides behind,  
Who from a fiery hand strews out  
The elves of life upon the wind?

And every one becomes a slave  
Labouring through earth from seed to sun,  
Till the green pillar's thick with grain  
And the long marvellous labour's done.

Ah, when the food is made for man,  
The spirits that the scythe sets free:  
Do they exult and do they fly,  
Sower of Life, again to Thee?

## CARRIERS

THOSE features that enchant you,  
Light limbs that shine like air:  
Be of one spell the master;  
The coloured wisp may bear  
Unto the Magic-Maker.  
Yea, a wisp of dream will bear.

Too rich a freight may founder.  
Imperial dreams go down.  
For light must be the galleon  
That shall not sink and drown.  
Thin is the airy ocean.  
Yea, a crumb of earth may drown.

They tell in sacred story  
One caught a wisp of dream,  
And saw in holy aether  
A shining woman gleam,  
The Usha, the Dawn Maiden;  
Yea, the beauty beyond dream.

## MOMENTARY

WHAT Wizard at twilight  
Made gay the light feet?  
What Voice in their voices  
Sounded so sweet?

Who whirled the children  
Into His dream,  
To sway with the boughs  
And curve with the stream?

One dance in one mind  
Were clouds in the air,  
The rapturous feet,  
The flicker of hair.

Too soon it was over  
The magical hour.  
They parted like leaves  
From a withering flower.

The twilight thickened:  
The moon rose pale,  
And they ran to their homes  
By the hill or the vale.

## FOR REMEMBRANCE

WE heard the accent of the King of Kings,  
And in our memory of immortal things  
We stored the prophets words. Oh, it was  
wise.

Be you remembered, gay and lovely eyes!  
Twin avatars of all that life desires,  
The pure, the unimaginable fires,  
Within the Mother's being. Oh, twin stars,  
Be you remembered as those avatars,  
The Wise revealers; for through you we see  
Life's radiance and its ceaseless ecstasy.

## A MURMUR IN THE GRASS

O PALE-LIPPED blossom  
Why do you sigh?  
“ For the many million  
Times I must die  
Ere I be as that glory  
Up in the sky.”

Your sisters with beauty  
Are satisfied.  
Is it not envy  
Dreams of such pride?  
“ No there is nothing  
To life denied.

“ It would be unjust,  
Unjust, if we  
Could dream of a beauty  
We might not be.  
Life is becoming  
All we see.

## A MURMUR IN THE GRASS 37

“ I shall rise from the grass,  
I shall fill all the blue,  
And I shall be blossom  
And fire and dew  
In the boundlessness  
We travel through.”

## THE LONELY

LONE and forgotten  
Through a long sleeping,  
In the heart of age  
A child woke weeping.

No invisible mother  
Was nigh him there  
Laughing and nodding  
From earth and air.

No elfin comrades  
Came at his call,  
And the earth and the air  
Were blank as a wall.

The darkness thickened  
Upon him creeping,  
In the heart of age  
A child lay weeping.

## THE ETERNAL LOVERS

WHIRLED on their starry Odyssey  
From heaven to earth, in this deep glade  
The eternal lovers hold their court  
Within the heart of man and maid.

That darkness throbs with hidden fire:  
The pulse beats fast: the heavens call:  
Earth is transfigured, and the twain  
Breathe as they did before the Fall.

When King and Queen feast in the heart  
They squander all the gold of years  
To make their banquet gay, then leave  
A ruined heart, a house of tears.

## A DREAM OF DEFEATED BEAUTY

ALL day they played in gardens hid amid  
golden towers  
That made the blue burn deeper above their  
world of flowers.  
Within their dream-girt gardens the pools  
drank in the sky  
And the light laughing figures that flamed  
or fluttered by.  
There lute or harp string sounded from noon  
to eventide,  
And every voice that murmured a mirror  
was to pride.  
All day on light and music the young queen  
feasted deep:  
Her happy heart foretelling the hour of love  
and sleep,  
When he unto whose glory the earth made  
sacrifice  
Would give all to make richer the dark of  
lovely eyes.  
Within her palace chamber the purple  
slumbrous shade  
At midnight slowly lightened where the  
young queen was laid;

And moonlight marbled over flower foam  
and jewel sheen  
And carved in pearl and mystery the white  
limbs of the queen.  
The young queen smiled in slumber as if  
in dream she knew  
What dragons chained lay sleeping: what  
horns for battle blew:  
And who would bow the genii from thrones  
of blinding fire  
To send their airy children to dance at her  
desire.  
The young queen paled in slumber as if she  
there had known  
A majesty unbending on some unconquered  
throne.  
Where had she soared in slumber? And  
who was this who came  
Making the dusk all starry with plumes of  
magic flame?  
Who mourned in lofty sorrow above the  
body's pride  
“ This Babylon that I have built ” and bowed  
its head and sighed.

## MERCHANDISE OF LIGHT

Was it not worth the farewell to the sun,  
O caravan of rays through desert space,  
To bear the image of this lovely face?  
Now hurry with the beauty you have won.  
Where shall it not be known when you have  
run

The shining leagues to your appointed place,  
And far and starry hamlets know that grace,  
So from the light new beauty may be spun?  
Marvel of animate ivory and fire!

Proud head upcast with heaven-assailing gaze  
As if for flight! Nay, nay, you need not  
wings

To reach the sky; for, elder to desire,  
Your image scatters on a million rays  
And, quivering with that beauty, aether  
sings.

## HEREAFTER

ALTHOUGH the merchant be your care  
The mart or field, do not forget—  
To leave a glory on the air  
When the red Gaelic sun has set—

Some prophet must have cried a word  
The hurrying world will pause to hear.  
Even for the unfaltering sword  
No one will hold your memory dear.

The Greece of Pericles is cold:  
Yet still there shines beyond its seas  
The wisdom Diotima told  
In the rapt ear of Socrates.

## WASTE

ALL that heroic mood,  
The will to suffer pain,  
Were it on beauty spent,  
An intellectual gain:

Had a fierce pity breathed  
O'er wronged or fallen life,  
Though strife had been unwise  
We were not shamed by strife:

Had they but died for some  
High image in the mind,  
Not spilt the sacrifice  
For words hollow as wind!

Darkened the precious fire:  
The will we honour most  
Spent in the waste! What sin  
Against the Holy Ghost!

## WATCHERS

My heart grew ice because of that grim head,  
Red sparking eyes alert for pounce or flight,  
Features miscarven by strange appetite,  
Till kinship with the Elohim was dead,  
And kestrel, snake and rat were in their  
stead,

Glaring through eyeholes that let in no light,  
Slinking through corridors made black as  
night,

The paths the heavenly hierarchies should  
tread.

A company of starry ones without  
That midnight wait on the lost wanderer,  
The hero whom these demon things immure.  
The shining ones make answer to my doubt,  
“ Our Lord is buried in this sepulchre.  
We wait His resurrection. It is sure! ”

## A PRISONER

BRIXTON, SEPTEMBER 1920

SEE, though the oil be low, more purely still  
and higher  
The flame burns in the body's lamp. The  
watchers still  
Gaze with unseeing eyes while the Prome-  
thean will,  
The Uncreated Light, the Everlasting Fire,  
Sustain themselves against the torturer's de-  
sire,  
Even as the fabled Titan chained upon the  
hill.  
Burn on, shine here, thou immortality, until  
We too can light our lamps at the funereal  
pyre;  
Till we too can be noble, unshakeable, un-  
dismayed;  
Till we too can burn with the holy flame, and  
know  
There is that within us can conquer the  
dragon pain,  
And go to death alone, slowly and unafraid.

## A PRISONER

47

The candles of God already are burning row  
on row:

Farewell, light-bringer; fly to thy fountain  
again.

## A LOST DREAM

THE unleashed air,  
A wild cold animal,  
Hunts on the hills.

Yet the hollow amid the rocks  
Is brimful of quiet,  
So quiet  
Faery may be heard:  
So still  
There is not a flicker  
In the candle of dream.

The warm East  
Is at my feet.  
In burning blue  
Lagoon beyond lagoon  
Faints shimmering,  
All lotus besprinkled—  
Rose lotuses!

A woman leans,  
A dream out of Allah.  
The water quivers  
In ivory ringlets

Beneath her fingers  
As she plucks the blossom she twines  
In the dark shining of her hair.

She stands;  
Stillness in ivory!  
But ere I see her eyes,  
Ere I make them mine,  
The wild cold animal  
Leaps into the hollow.  
The candle flickers and is blown;  
The paths all are darkened.  
A dream has lost its way to life.

## MICHAEL

A wind blew by from icy hills,  
Shook with cold breath the daffodils,  
And shivered as with silver mist  
The lake's pale leaden amethyst.  
It pinched the barely budded trees  
And rent the twilight tapestries:  
Left for one hallowed instant bare  
A single star in lonely air  
O'er rocky fields the bitter wind  
Had swept of all their human kind.

Ere that the fisher folk were all  
Snug under thatch and sheltering wall  
Breathing the cabin's air of gold  
Safe from blue storm and nipping cold.  
And, clustered round the hearth within  
With fiery hands and burnished chin,  
They sat and listened to old tales  
Or legends of gigantic gales.  
Some told of phantom craft they knew  
That sailed with a flame-coloured crew,  
And came up strangely through the wind  
Havens invisible to find

By those rare cities poets sung  
Cresting the Islands of the Young.

How do the heights above our head,  
The depths below the water spread,  
Waken the spirit in such wise  
That to the deep the deep replies,  
And in far spaces of the soul  
The oceans stir, the heavens roll?

Michael must leave the morrow morn  
The countryside where he was born,  
And all day long had Michael clung  
Unto the kin he lived among.  
But at some talk of sea and sky  
He heard an older mother cry.  
The cabin's golden air grew dim:  
The cabin's walls drew down on him:  
The cabin's rafters hid from sight  
The cloudy roof-tree of the night.  
And Michael could not leave behind  
His kinsmen of the wave and wind  
Without farewell. The path he took  
Ran like a twisted, shining brook,  
Speckled with stones and ruts and rills,  
Mid a low valley of dark hills.  
And trees so tempest bowed that they  
Seemed to seek double root in clay.  
At last the dropping valley turned:  
A sky of murky citron burned,

Above through flying purples seen  
Lay pools of heavenly blue and green.  
From the sea rim unto the caves  
Rolled on a mammoth herd of waves.  
And all about the rocky bay  
Leaped up grey forests of wild spray,  
Glooming above the ledges brown  
Ere their pale drift came drenching down.

Things delicate and dewy clung  
To Michael's cheeks. The salt air stung.  
From crag to crag did Michael leap  
Until he overhung the deep;  
Saw in vast caves the waters roam,  
The ceaseless ecstasy of foam,  
Whirlpools of opal, lace of light  
Strewn over quivering malachite,  
Ice-tinted mounds of water rise,  
Glinting as with a million eyes,  
Reel in and out of light and shade,  
Show depths of ivory or jade,  
New broidery every instant wear  
Spun by the magic weaver, Air.  
Then Michael's gaze was turned from these  
Unto the far, rejoicing seas  
Whose twilight legions onward rolled  
A turbulence of dusky gold,  
A dim magnificence of froth,  
A thunder tone which was not wrath,  
But such a speech as earth might cry  
Unto far kinsmen in the sky.

The spray was tossed aloft in air:  
A bird was flying here and there.  
Foam, bird and twilight to the boy  
Seemed to be but a single joy.  
He closed his eyes that he might be  
Alone with all that ecstasy.

What was it unto Michael gave  
This joy, the life of earth and wave?  
Or did his candle shine so bright  
But by its own and natural light?  
Ah, who can answer for what powers  
Are with us in the secret hours!  
Though wind and wave cried out no less,  
Entranced unto forgetfulness,  
He heard no more the water's din;  
A golden ocean rocked within,  
A boat of bronze and crystal wrought  
And steered by the enchanter, Thought,  
Was flying with him fast and far  
To isles that glimmered, each a star  
Hung low upon the distant rim,  
And then the vision rushed on him.

The palaces of light were there  
With towers that faded up in air,  
With amethyst and silver spires,  
And casements lit with precious fires,  
And mythic forms with wings outspread  
And faces from which light was shed

High upon gleaming pillars set  
On turret and on parapet.  
The bells were chiming all around  
And the sweet air was drunk with sound.

Too swift did Michael pass to see  
Ildathach's mystic chivalry  
Graved on the walls, its queens and kings  
Girt round with eyes and stars and wings.  
The magic boat with Michael drew  
To some deep being that he knew,  
Some mystery that to the wise  
Is clouded o'er by Paradise,  
Some will that would not let him stay  
Hurried the boat away, away.  
At last its fiery wings were still  
Folded beneath some heavenly hill.  
But was that Michael light as air  
Was travelling up the mighty stair?  
Or had impetuous desire  
Woven for him that form of fire  
Which with no less a light did shine  
Than those with countenance divine  
Who thronged the gateway as he came,  
Faces of rapture and of flame,  
The glowing, deep, unwavering eyes  
Of those eternity makes wise.  
And lofty things to him were said  
As to one risen from the dead.  
  
What there beyond the gate befell  
Michael could never after tell.

Imagination still would fail  
Some height too infinite to scale,  
Some being too profound to scan,  
Some time too limitless to span.  
Yet when he lifted up his eyes  
That foam was grey against the skies.  
That same wild bird was on the wing.  
That twilight wave was glimmering.  
And twilight wave and foam and bird  
Had hardly in his vision stirred.  
Since he had closed his eyes to be  
Of that majestic company.

And can a second then suffice  
To hurry us to Paradise,  
What seemed so endlessly sublime  
Shrink to a particle of time?  
Why was the call on Michael made?  
What charge was on his spirit laid?  
And could the way for him be sure  
Made by excess of light obscure?  
However fiery is the dream,  
How faint in life the echoing gleam!  
And faint was all that happed that day  
As home he went his dreamy way.

And now has Michael, for his share  
Of life, the city's dingy air,  
By the black reek of chimneys smudged  
O'er the dark warehouse where he drudged,

Where for dull life men pay in toll  
Toil and the shining of the soul.  
Within his attic he would fret  
Like a wild creature in a net,  
And on the darkness he would make  
The jewel of a little lake,  
A bloom of fairy blue amid  
The bronze and purple heather hid;  
Make battlemented cliffs grow red  
Where the last rose of day was shed,  
Be later in rich darkness seen  
Against a sky of glowing green.  
Or he would climb where quiet fills  
With dream the shepherd on the hills,  
Where he could see as from high land  
The golden sickle of the sand  
Curving around the bay to where  
The granite cliffs were worn by air,  
And watch the wind and waves at play,  
The heavenly gleam of falling spray.  
The sunlit surges foam below  
In wrinklings as of liquid snow.  
And he could breathe the airs that blew  
From worlds invisible he knew.  
How far away now from the boy!  
How unassailable their joy!

So Michael would recall each place  
As lovers a remembered face.  
But, though the tender may not tire,  
Memory is but a fading fire.

And Michael's might have sunken low,  
Changed to grey ash its coloured glow,  
Did not upon his hearing fall  
The mountain speech of Donegal,  
And that he swiftly turned to greet  
The tongue whose accent was so sweet,  
And found one of that eager kind  
The army of the Gaelic mind,  
Still holding through the Iron Age  
The spiritual heritage,  
The story from the gods that ran  
Through many a cycle down to man.  
And soon with them had Michael read  
The legend of the famous dead,  
From him who with his single sword  
Stayed a great army at the ford,  
Down to the vagrant poets, those  
Who gave their hearts to the Dark Rose,  
And of the wanderers who set sail  
And found a lordlier Innisfail,  
And saw a sun that never set  
And all their hearts' desires were met.

How may the past if it be dead  
Its light within the living shed?  
Or does the Everliving hold  
Earth's memories from the Age of Gold?  
And are our dreams, arduous and fires  
But ancient unfulfilled desires?  
And do they shine within our clay  
And do they urge us on their way?

As Michael read the Gaelic scroll  
It seemed the story of the soul,  
And those who wrought, lest there should  
fail,

From earth the legend of the Gael,  
Seemed warriors of Eternal Mind,  
Still holding in a world grown blind,  
From which belief and hope had gone,  
The lovely magic of its dawn.

Thrice on the wheel of time recurred  
The season of the risen Lord  
Since Michael left his home behind  
And faced the chilly Easter wind,  
And saw the twilight waters gleam  
And dreamed an unremembered dream.  
Was it because the Easter time  
With mystic nature was in chime  
That memory was roused from sleep,  
Or was deep calling unto deep?  
The lord in man had risen here,  
From the dark sepulchre of fear,  
Was laughing, gay and undismayed,  
Though on a fragile barricade  
The bullet rang, the death star broke,  
The street waved dizzily in smoke,  
And there the fierce and lovely breath  
Of flame in the grey mist was death.

Yet Michael felt within him rise  
The rapture that is sacrifice.

What miracle was wrought on him  
So that each leaden freighted limb  
Seemed lit with fire, seemed light as air?  
How came upon him dying there  
Amid the city's burning piles  
The vision of the mystic isles?  
For underneath and through the smoke  
A glint of golden waters broke;  
And floating on that phantom tide  
With fiery wings expanded wide  
A barque of bronze and crystal wrought  
Called forth by the enchanter, Thought.  
And noble faces glowed above,  
Faces of ecstasy and love,  
And eyes whose shining calm and pure  
Was in eternity secure,  
And lofty forms of burnished air  
Stood on the deck by Michael there.  
And spirit upon spirit gazed,  
And one to Michael's lips upraised  
A cup filled from that holy well  
O'er which the Nuts of Wisdom fell,  
And as he drank there reeled away  
Vision of earth and night and day,  
And he was far away from these  
Afloat upon the heavenly seas.

I do not know if such a band  
Came from the Many Coloured Land  
Or whether in our being we  
Make such a magic phantasy

Of images which draw us hence  
Unto our own magnificence.  
Yet many a one a tryst has kept  
With the immortal while he slept,  
Woke unremembering, went his way,  
Life seemed the same from day to day,  
Till the predestined hour came,  
A hidden will leaped up in flame,  
And through its deed the risen soul  
Strides on self-conquering to the goal.

This was the dream of one who died  
For country, said his countryside.  
We choose this cause or that, but still  
The Everlasting works Its will.  
The slayer and the slain may be  
Knit in a secret harmony.  
What does the spirit urge us to?  
Some sacrifice that may undo  
The bonds that hold us to the clay  
And limit life to this cold day?  
Some for a gentle dream will die:  
Some for an empire's majesty:  
Some for a loftier humankind,  
Some to be free as cloud or wind,  
Will leave their valley, climb their slope.  
Whate'er the deed, whate'er the hope,  
Through all the varied battle-cries  
A Shepherd with a single voice  
Still lures us nigh the Gates of Gold  
That open to the Starry Fold.

So it may be that Michael died  
For some far other countryside,  
Than that grey Ireland he had known,  
Yet on his dream of it was thrown  
Some light from that consuming Fire  
Which is the end of all desire.  
If men adore It as the power  
Empires and cities tower on tower  
Are built in worship by the way  
High Babylon or Nineveh.  
Seek It as love and there may be  
A Golden Age and Arcady.  
All shadows are they of one thing  
To which all life is journeying.

THE END

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